

Presentation by Leader and Chief Executive of Fenland District Council

FDC Overview & Scrutiny
Meeting

6 October 2025

Sources of further information

Please click on the links below to access further information:

[Business Plan 2025-26](#)

[Annual Report 2024-25](#)

[Corporate Priority Reports already tabled at O&S Committee meetings](#)

[Joint Portfolio Holder Reports tabled at Council Meetings](#)

Finance

- Balanced budget set for 2025/26 but in year pressures are currently suggesting a deficit £1,432k if interventions are not met.
- Projected deficit of £2,217k (2026/27) rising to £4,554k in 2029/30.
- No Council Tax increases included in these figures.
- Outcomes of Fair Funding, Business Rates and New Homes Bonus reviews are expected in 2026/27.
- Financial control and progress with the Commercial and Investment Strategy, transformation, savings and income continues to be very important for FDC.
- Draft Budget for 2026/27 will need to be considered by Cabinet in December.
- The External Audit backlog is now signed off and the 2024/25 Audit is well underway and will hopefully be signed off by December 2025.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

- On 16 December 2024, [English Devolution White Paper](#) (HM Government) was published outlining extensive reforms to the local government framework across England.
- The Government intends to implement LGR in all two-tier areas and in some adjoining unitary authority areas. All councils in an area are expected to collaborate on unitary proposals that serve the best interests of the region.

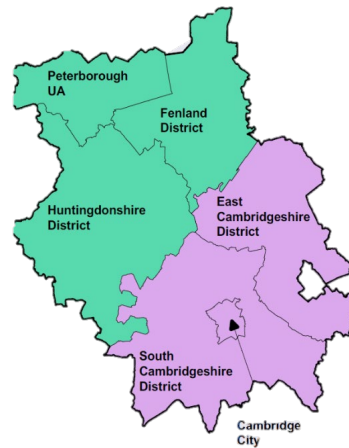
Progress to date

- 5 February 2025: Formal invite received to submit initial LGR proposal.
- 14 March 2025: Councillor's debate future of Local Government at Full Council meeting.
- 21 March 2025: Interim LGR response submitted by FDC leader Cllr Chris Boden.
- 11 June 2025: Council leaders announced three preferred options for creating new unitary councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- 19 June 2025: Engagement survey launched across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- 21 July 2025: FDC Councillor's discuss proposals for LGR.

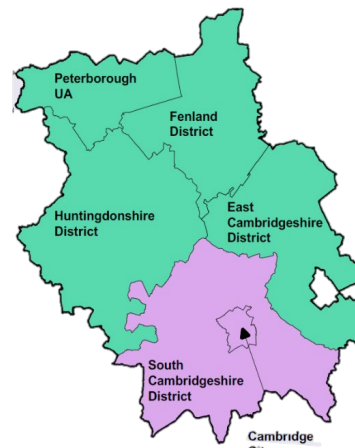
Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

What proposals are we considering?

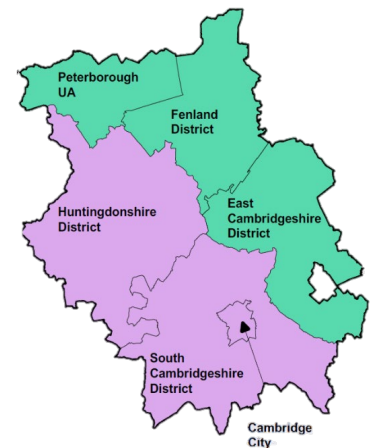
- ❖ The Leaders of Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and East Cambs support **Option B**
- ❖ Cambridgeshire County supports **Option A**
- ❖ Huntingdonshire is considering **Option C** and a new **Option E**
- ❖ Peterborough are currently considering **Option D**



Option A



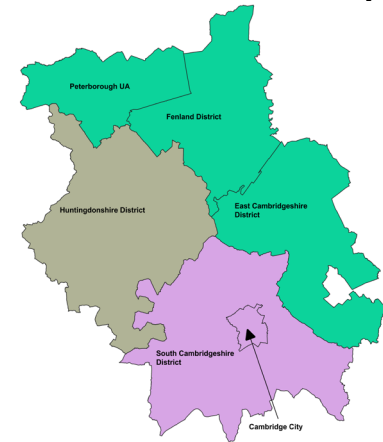
Option B



Option C



Option D



Option E

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Next Steps:

- 28 November 2025: Local authorities to submit final proposals for LGR to Government. Government will then decide which proposals will be subject to a statutory consultation.
- January 2026 - April 2026: Government consultation on the submitted proposals.
- May 2026 - August 2026: Government to make decisions on which proposal to implement and prepare the necessary legislation for reorganisation.
- August 2026 - December 2026: Transitional legislation required for the reorganisation will be prepared and laid.
- May 2027: Shadow unitary elections will be held.
- 1 April 2028: The new unitary councils will go live.

Fenland Inspire!

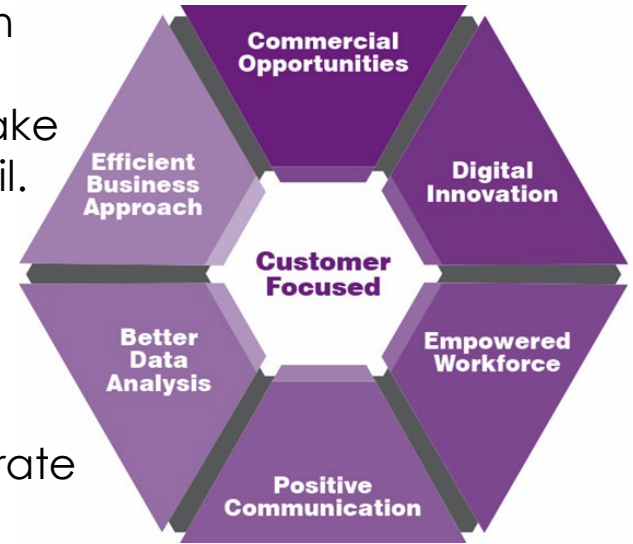
- A list of capital investment initiatives identified by Cabinet Members under the Fenland Inspire! banner. It is envisaged that these projects will enhance sports, leisure, and heritage facilities, promote healthy lifestyles and preserve the district's unique character.
- Officers are currently progressing the projects, or parts of projects, listed below:
 - Wisbech Park Splash Pad: phase one only
 - Wisbech 11/12 High Street
 - Manor Leisure Centre, Whittlesey
 - Chatteris Leisure Centre condition survey
 - District wide assessment: new play equipment
 - New Village Green, Wimblington
 - Civil Parking Enforcement
 - St John's Chapels, March
 - New March Country Park: confirmation of land transfer agreement only
 - 3G pitches: preparing or submitting applications to the Football Foundation for external funding
 - Clarkson Memorial lighting and planters



Corporate Projects

Transformation

- We continued to roll out our ongoing transformation agenda programme to optimise our workforce, improve services and customer experience and make it even easier for people to interact with the Council.
- TA1 has successfully delivered over £1m savings over the medium term. The TA2 Programme, currently supports three key strands of work, Service Reviews, encompassing all services across the organisation, Ad-Hoc requests in addition to Corporate Transformation projects.
- TA2 has so far delivered £241k of cashable savings, and over 7,000 of Officer hours have been saved by introducing more efficient business processes and the use of technology.
- We are exploring how the use of AI can assist with streamlining our back-office operations and administrative tasks and make them even more efficient.
- The transformation team are also increasingly supporting corporate projects due to the changing context in which the organisation works including the Fenland Inspire Programme and Local Government Reform.



Corporate Projects

March High Street

- The March Future High Streets Fund Project aims to create a vibrant, sustainable, and attractive town centre for the benefit of local residents, businesses, and visitors.
- The completion of the Broad Street regeneration scheme represents a major milestone which has transformed the appearance and functionality of the area, including improvements to the streetscape, better pedestrian facilities, enhanced green spaces, and upgraded lighting.
- The scheme was awarded “highly commended” at the national CIHT Creating Better Places Awards on 4 June 2025.
- The completion of the regeneration of the Marketplace, which forms a central focal point of March's high street. These improvements have enhanced its appeal as a community hub, with better seating areas, more greenery, and improved pedestrian walkways.
- Improvements at the gateway point to the town outside Iceland have also been completed with new planters and paving, and the removal of a large dead tree that had previously dominated the space.
- The toilet block in March is now under construction and the anticipated completion date is October 2025.



Corporate Projects

24 High Street, Wisbech

- This project is in the final stages. The building is completed with all internal works finished and are down.
- A road closure is required in Wisbech High Street for connection to the sewer system and once completed the building will be handed over to the Council.



Fenland Future Ltd

- Fenland Future Ltd is developing its first two housing schemes on sites formerly owned by Fenland District Council. These are in Chatteris and Wisbech.
- The Elms, Chatteris - a residential development of up to 54 homes on a site to the east of Chatteris, off The Elms. The scheme will provide a range of homes for sale and affordable homes for rent and shared ownership. The homes for sale will include 2, 3 and 4 bed houses plus much-needed 2 bed bungalows.
- Nene Waterfront, Wisbech - bringing forward a range of housing options for the site. These will include a new all affordable extra care housing scheme for rent.

Strategic Projects

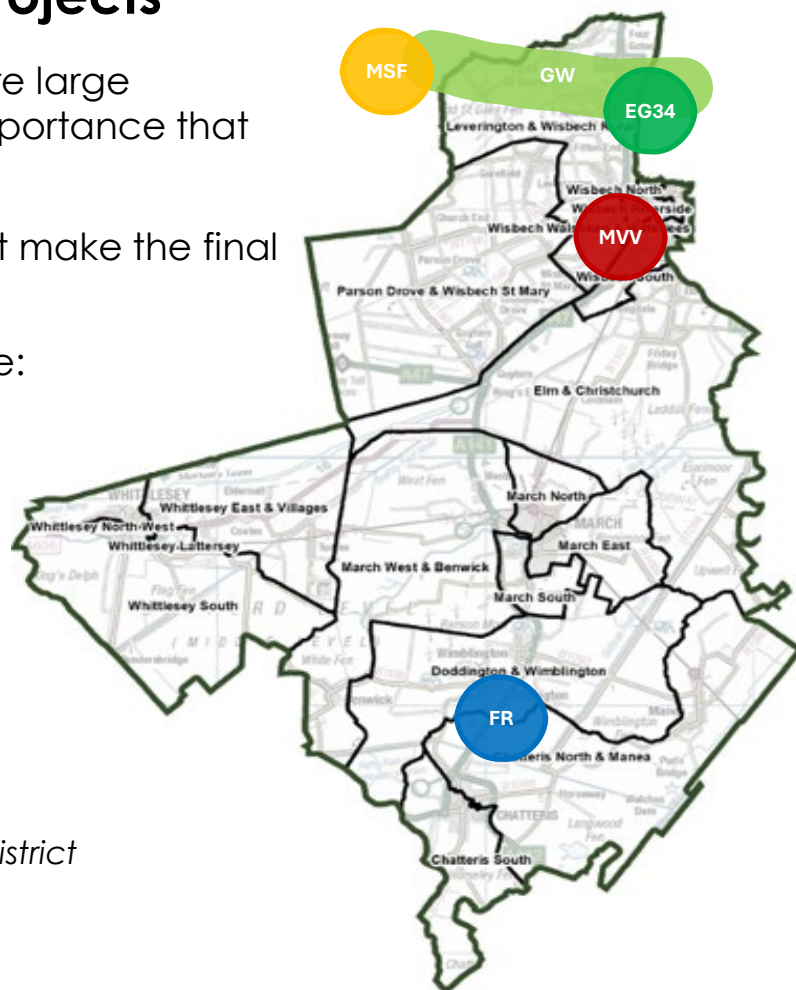
Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) are large infrastructure schemes that are of such scale and importance that they are determined nationally, not locally.

Local authorities are statutory consultees — we don't make the final decision, but we play a critical influencing role.

Current NSIPs within and adjacent to Fenland include:

- **Fens Reservoir** (Anglian Water)
pre-application stage - submission expected in early 2027
- **Grimsby to Walpole** (National Grid)
pre-application stage - submission expected in early 2027
- **Eastern Green Links 3 and 4** (National Grid)
pre-application stage - submission expected in late 2026
- **MVV Medworth Energy from Waste Facility**
consented – post-decision stage
- **Meridian Solar Farm**
Pre-application stage - this proposal is adjacent to the district

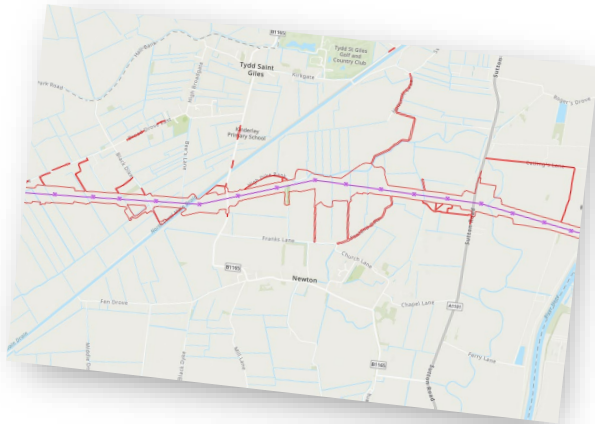


Strategic Projects



NSIP Progress Points

- Progressing Planning Performance Agreements with National Grid and Anglian Water to ensure full cost recovery for any work undertaken by FDC on engaging with their projects.
- Attending regular meetings with developers to help shape and influence proposals – including attending technical working groups and site visits on things like landscape, ecology, air quality, noise and vibration, traffic and transport and socio-economic matters.
 - Key issues raised include things like cumulative construction impacts; loss (or temporary disturbance) of best and most versatile agricultural land; impacts on local environment; impacts on nearby communities and businesses; skills and development opportunities and advocating for wider community benefits, i.e. a new visitor centre near Chatteris focusing on environmental education linked to the Fens Reservoir project.
- Responded to Stage 2 consultations on Grimsby to Walpole, Eastern Green Links 3 and 4 and Meridian Solar Farm



NB: A stage 3 non-statutory consultation on Fens Reservoir is anticipated to go live in mid-October – final date TBC

Strategic Projects

Transport

- **Whittlesey Relief Road**
- Public consultation launched in October 2024 to invite views on the initial options identified as part of the project
- Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) published May 2025 – preferred option emerging from the study is a new southern relief road for Whittlesey, with re-routing of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and active travel improvements for walking and cycling
- On 19 May 2025, Cabinet:
 - Noted the SOBC
 - Agreed in principle to refine the scheme and assess wider benefits
 - Requested officers explore funding options to secure an additional **£220,000** to progress the work.